

The President's Daily Brief

25 April 1969

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26 April 1969

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF
25 APRIL 1969

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

President Hilu is reported to have accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Karami, who still maintains he cannot retain the support of his fellow Muslims if he accepts Hilu's decision to confront the fedayeen. Hilu, however, is convinced that, if he does not come to a showdown with the fedayeen, Lebanon's sovereignty and freedom of action will be destroyed. He believes any concessions to the fedayeen would only preserve their presence for a later confrontation at a less favorable time. If he cannot find another Muslim leader willing to take on what Karami has rejected, Hilu, as a last resort, is prepared to turn the government over to the army.

(Central Intelligence Bulletin, 26 Apr)

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There is nothing significant to report on other areas.

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

EUROPE

In a short, emotion-charged TV appeal to the nation today, De Gaulle defended the substance of the reforms he has proposed and made clear that he would resign immediately if the referendum on them failed. He warned that a negative vote would lead to "disastrous upheaval" and told Frenchmen that they held the "destiny of France" in their hands. De Gaulle neither lectured nor threatened but spoke in a fatherly tone.

His performance was impressive, but he is fighting an uphill battle. Polls released on the eve of his speech by the French Institute of Public Opinion, which has a very good record, show that 51 percent of those who have made up their minds will vote "no" in the referendum. The percentage of those who either are undecided or plan to abstain has dropped sharply from 44 percent last week to 21 percent in the current poll. Since the abstention rate in past referenda has run over that, it would appear that most of the 21 percent do not plan to vote and there remain very few undecided voters.

If De Gaulle loses the referendum, Alain Poher, the 60-year-old president of the Senate, will take over as interim president until new elections are held, not sooner than 20 and not later than 35 days after the office is vacant. Poher, an anti-Gaullist centrist who was a political unknown until his recent election to the Senate presidency

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He supports Britain's bid

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for entry into the Common Market and has called for an accelerated pace of economic and political integration in Europe.

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Speculation that De Gaulle may resign pushed the dollar value of the franc last week to its lowest level since November, despite stringent exchange controls. These pressures were reinforced on 16 April by the rise in the West German discount rate, which triggered a round of increases in German interest rates.

The Bank of France has lost over \$400 million in foreign exchange during the past two weeks in its efforts to support the franc. As during the financial crisis last November, the British pound also suffered, but coordinated action by the major central banks substantially reduced pressure on the mark and sterling.

VIETNAM

Prime Minister Huong has strong doubts that South Vietnam's politicians will be able to join together with Thieu to form a stable and cohesive nationalist political organization. He told Ambassador Bunker Thursday that since Thieu made his appeal for national unity, the politicians have been showing the same old interest in the spoils of office. On the other hand, he does not believe these politicians and their coteries are likely to play a critical role in the coming political competition with the Communists. Rather, he believes, the contest will be decided by

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the actual performance of the government on behalf of the people.

Despite Thieu's current attempts to lure some political leaders into a new progovernment confederation, he probably is depending primarily on the government's own apparatus of cadre at the village and district level to get the job done in the coming months.

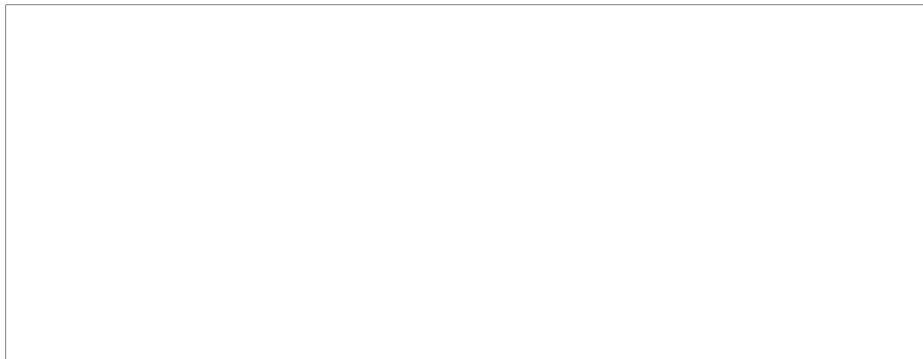
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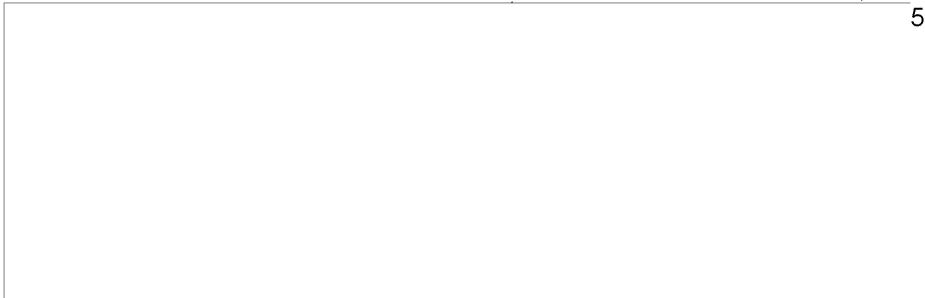
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SOVIET AFFAIRS



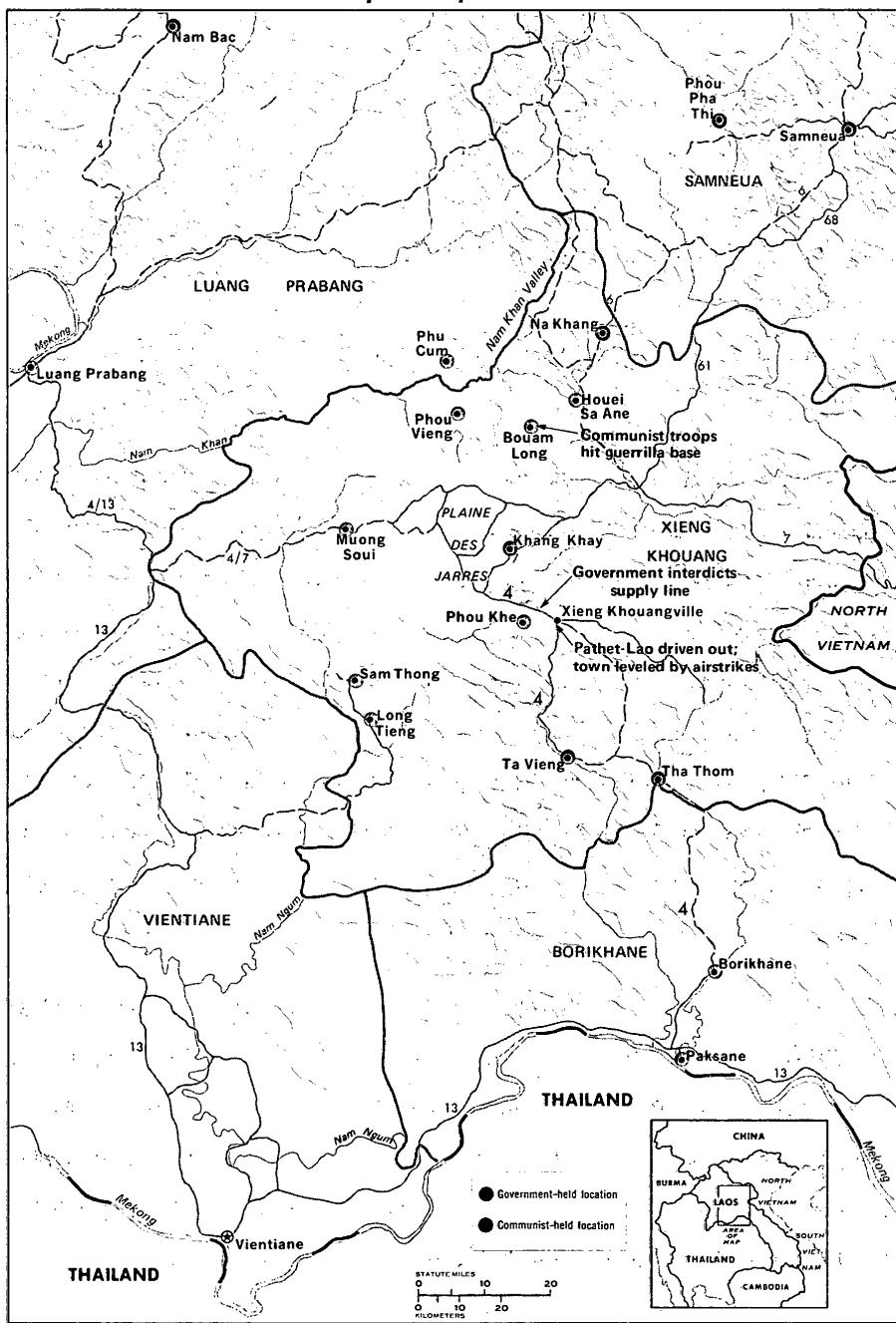
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MIDDLE EAST

There is nothing significant to report. Tensions in Lebanon, along the Israeli-Jordanian border, and along the Suez Canal are all unusually high.

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LAOS: Plaine des Jarres Military Activity Increases



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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

LAOS

The government's counteroffensive south of the Plaine des Jarres continues to make progress. Government forces have interdicted traffic along Route 4, a critical Communist supply line in southern Xieng Khouang Province, and have driven Pathet Lao military and civilian elements from Xieng Khouangville. The town itself has been leveled by US and Lao air strikes.

The enemy, still reacting cautiously, has so far made only a desultory effort to force the guerrillas from positions near Route 4.

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Although the counteroffensive has caught the enemy off guard and has helped bolster the morale of government forces, it has not achieved its principal purpose, forcing the enemy to divert troops from operations in northern Xieng Khouang. The Communists there are applying fresh pressure.

North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops hit the government guerrilla base at Bouam Long on three consecutive nights but were unable to dislodge the defenders.

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COMMUNIST CHINA

A preliminary assessment of the new central committee list suggests that it is a compromise product, with divergent interest groups well represented. There are no important casualties among strong supporters of the Cultural Revolution; on the other hand a few victims of Red Guard attacks have been resurrected. Provincial military and political leaders are on the list in force, but officials from the central government ministries also are fairly well represented.

The increased size of the new committee suggests not only that it is the result of compromise but that it will be too unwieldy to play a major political role. The presence of a number of political nonentities will tend to reduce further the political significance of the committee.

The new central committee should meet shortly to name a reconstituted politburo. At that time a new secretariat and other important administrative appointments may be announced.

JAPAN

With the approach of "Okinawa Day" on Monday, the police have made elaborate preparations to contain countrywide disorders planned by extremists. It is by no

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means certain they will be able to keep the lid on completely, particularly in Tokyo. Several student groups are said to be planning to use more violent tactics than usual in attacks against government offices and the US Embassy over the next few days.

PAKISTAN

The Yahya regime is doggedly pursuing the line it laid out for itself after the coup: no provocative security measures, a campaign against the rampant corruption of the Ayub days, and conciliatory gestures toward some opposition groups, notably labor. It is now allowing a certain amount of political activity; politicians and students, especially in East Pakistan, are beginning to find their voices again. But the regime clearly intends to monitor their efforts closely, and the muzzle it has imposed on the press makes their pronouncements all but inaudible to most of the region's inhabitants.

There is some indication that Yahya is serious when he says he does not want to remain president for more than a year or so. It is still questionable, however, whether his low-key efforts to set Pakistan on its feet again could accomplish their aim in any time frame, much less in one or two years. Yahya has made no discernible progress with the problem which overshadows all others, the alienation of East Pakistan.

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